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President Bush Meets with President Arroyo of the Philippines

Oval Office

10:25 A.M. EDT

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PRESIDENT BUSH: Madam President, it is a pleasure to welcome you back to the Oval Office. We have just had a very constructive dialogue. First, I want to tell you how proud I am to be the President of a nation that -- in which there's a lot of Philippine-Americans. They love America and they love their heritage. And I reminded the President that I am reminded of the great talent of the -- of our Philippine-Americans when I eat dinner at the White House. (Laughter.)

PRESIDENT ARROYO: Yes.

PRESIDENT BUSH: And the chef is a great person and a really good cook, by the way, Madam President.

We talked about our friendship, our bilateral relations, and we spent some time on foreign policy.

First, I expressed our deep condolences to those who suffered as a result of the typhoon. And I know there's some families that are hurting. Some are wondering whether or not their loved ones will, you know, reappear. We, the American people care about the human suffering that's taking place, and we send our prayers.

Secondly, I informed the President -- Secretary Gates informed the President, through me, that the United States will move the USS Ronald Reagan, a large aircraft carrier, to help with the assistance, along with other U.S. Navy assets. We're happy to do it. We want to help our friends in a time of need.

We talked about, you know, food, and I assured the President we'll continue to help. We helped with rice in the past. And, you know, I'm proud of my country. We give a lot of food aid, and this is a time where America needs to step up, and we will, Madam President.

We talked about our mutual desire to advance how important it is to move forward the bilateral and multilateral trade agendas. I'm a -- I believe trade is beneficial to both our countries. I'm hopeful we can get a Doha Round done, and we strategized together about how we can move the process.

I congratulated the President on her strong stand on counterterrorism -- more than strong stand -- effective stand on counterterrorism, as well as laying out a vision for peace. The President has been very strong in having a carrots-and-sticks approach -- "sticks," of course, say we're not going to allow for people to terrorize our citizens; the "carrot" approach is that there's peace available.

We talked about Burma, the area, the region. The President has been a very strong leader when it comes to the freedom agenda and human dignity.

And so, all in all, we had a very constructive talk. I'm proud you're here.

PRESIDENT ARROYO: Thank you.



PRESIDENT BUSH: Thanks for coming.

PRESIDENT ARROYO: Thank you, thank you. Mr. President, with your permission, I'd like to address our countrymen in my own native language.

(Speaks in Tagalog. Translation provided by the State Department.) Fellow countrymen, America is a strong ally in supporting our efforts to strengthen our economy and reinforce our democracy. The Philippines and the United States have a strong relationship, and we are here today to discuss important bilateral issues with President Bush, members of his administration, and congressional leaders. As President Bush mentioned, we will focus our discussions, now more than ever, on food shortages, defense cooperation, and economic aid. Together with our friends, such as America, let us join forces and move our country forward towards the company of first world developed nations over the next 20 years.

Long live the Philippines, and long live the friendship between the Philippines and the United States.

PRESIDENT BUSH: I couldn't have said it better myself. (Laughter.)

PRESIDENT ARROYO: Thank you.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Thank you, all.

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